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SCIENTISTS ON FIRST ATOM BOMB PROJECT URGE BUSH AND YELTSIN TO DISMANTLE NUCLEAR THREAT

Sav U.S. Promotes Greater Proliferation By Continuing Cold-War Nuclear Policies

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WASHINGTON -- A key scientist who worked on the Manhattan Project that led to the first atomic bomb today joined Senator Mark O. Hatfield (R-Ore.), nuclear planning expert Daniel Ellsberg and Prof. Frank von Hippel in urging Presidents Bush and Yeltsin to make a joint commitment at their summit to the goals of Manhattan Project II -- a program to dismantle the nuclear threat unleashed 50 years ago.

Manhattan Project scientist Dr. Bernard Feld, a retired professor of physics at M.I.T. and a key assistant to nuclear pioneers Leo Szilard and Enrico Fermi, said "this is really the ideal time to make fundamental changes in our relationships with the Russians and other former Soviet republics."

"The obstacle to deep and lasting arms reductions is the United States. We have to be willing to go far enough to remove any remnant of super-power confrontations. My main worry is the encouragement that our lack of action would give to proliferation of nuclear weapons. If we get our act together, we might put that problem to an end," Feld said.

Sen. Hatfield remarked, "As a young Naval officer, I saw the effects of (Manhattan Project) research at Hiroshima...I join in the call for a new Manhattan Project -- Manhattan Project II -- which will put the same kind of energy and expertise into ending the arms race as there was in creating that race." Hatfield is co-sponsor with Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell of a bill calling for a one-year testing moratorium, which now has the support of 46 senators.

Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense and State official who drafted the Kennedy Administration guidance for the nuclear war plans, is director of Manhattan Project II at Physicians for Social Responsibility. He made a public letter to Presidents Bush and Yeltsin signed by over 40 organizations and 20 individuals urging the two presidents to achieve major goals of Manhattan Project II right now at their two-day summit. He offered the proposals in the letter as "a scorecard for the summit, a realistic yardstick for the success of the arms control negotiations, and a measure of how much will remain to be done."

Specifically, Manhattan Project II calls for Bush and Yeltsin to commit to the following steps at their summit: 1) end testing permanently; 2) commit to a mutual ceiling of 1,000 warheads or less; 3) adopt a "no-first-use" policy; 4) verifiably eliminate all tactical weapons; and 5) end production of fissile materials for weapons.

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"We don't doubt that our proposals will meet with resistance in the Administration, but we hope that President Bush will come to see that his highest priority now should be to commit President Yeltsin, and his successors, to reduce Russian warheads just as far and as fast as Yeltsin is willing to go. The Russians are clearly willing to go much lower than 4700 warheads or even 2000, so long as we match the reductions; and it is obviously in our interests, and the world's, to do just that, and to help them speed the process."

Unfortunately, he said, "President Bush seems so far to have used Secretary Baker's great diplomatic skills to bargain the Russians up to the higher ceiling the administration proposes, rather than bid them down from Yeltsin's counter-proposal."

"How can it be in our interest, or anyone's," he asked, "for Mr. Yeltsin's successors over the next decade to possess 4400 warheads rather than 2,000 or less?"

Ellsberg noted that conditions for successful disarmament that exist today "won't last forever. Without commitments now, there's no guarantee that the items up for bargaining today will be there in the future. And a failure to act now could lead to greater proliferation and greater regional nuclear threats. Just imagine, in Secretary Baker's words, a 'Yugoslavia with nukes.'"

Overhanging the scientists' concerns is U.S. refusal to agree to mutual verifiability of disarmament accords. President Bush has rejected a key premise that President Reagan accepted - "Trust, but verify" -- by refusing to consider international inspections of U.S. nuclear installations, von Hippel noted.

Frank von Hippel, a nuclear physicist and professor of international affairs at Princeton, said that -- even on its own terms -- the U.S. could maintain or improve security but accepting deeper arms cuts, ending nuclear testing, and agreeing to reciprocal verification of cuts.

"The administration has stated that its goals include getting the Russians to eliminate their multi-warhead land-based ballistic missiles. That could be achieved by adopting the much deeper cuts offered by President Yeltsin in January. Those cuts would also entail cutting submarine-based U.S. missiles, but they would achieve an important U.S. goal while offering the Russians assurance of a more proportionate reduction on both sides," von Hippel, who also serves as chairman of the research arm of the Federation of American Scientists, said.

He noted an end to testing is feasible, since 99 percent of the safety improvements that are the principal stated purpose of continued testing could be accomplished with at most a few tests before 1995. "The arsenal is already being made much safer by simply by retiring older warheads -- the more the better. We could deal with 99 percent of the remaining safety problem by replacing the warheads that contain sensitive high explosive on the Minuteman III, Trident I and Trident II missiles with warheads containing insensitive explosives. The Air Force and Navy have concluded, however, that these warheads are already safe enough. If the easy 99 percent of the problem isn't worth doing, why should we spend tens of billions and test for at least another decade working on the remaining 1 percent?" The other arguments for continuing testing are even weaker, he said.

Von Hippel urged that the U.S. "lock in those reductions under way and under discussion" by verifying the destruction of the nuclear warheads, putting the plutonium and highly-enriched

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uranium recovered from them under safeguards, and implementing international safeguards to assure a cutoff in the further production of these materials for weapons.

In a written statement, Manhattan Project scientist Ray E. Kidder, recently retired from the Lawrence Livermore weapons lab, stressed the "bi-stable" nature of a test ban, that is, "unless all of them agree to a permanent halt in testing, none of them will."

Kidder wrote that the five openly nuclear nations should agree on a comprehensive test ban by the end of 1995, and that, based on his "recent evaluation of the safety of the U.S. nuclear stockpile," the U.S. could accomplish its safety goals with four tests conducted in the next three years.

Kidder's work provided the technical basis for House passage June 4 of a one-year U.S. moratorium on nuclear testing.

The scientists also presented a statement from Prof. Glenn Seaborg, a Manhattan Project scientist, winner of the Nobel Prize for his isolation of plutonium and head of the Atomic Energy Commission under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, who wrote: "I continue to believe that a comprehensive test ban is in the best interests of the United States and all the countries of the world. The advantages of an immediate mutual moratorium and of a comprehensive test ban outweigh, in my judgment, any perceived benefits of further tests for any reason."

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